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STREET SHEET

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HOMELESS PEOPLE MAKE LOCAL WINS IN THE MIDST OF A DIVIDED NATION

Trump isn't the only surprise winner this election season. Here in San Francisco, homeless people had a major win, despite all the trump style shenanigans coming from our local policy makers. With San Franciscans top issue being homelessness, there was plenty of opportunity to determine the fate of our most destitute citizenry. The positive results may not be obvious on the surface, but let me explain.

Back in spring, homeless advocates were researching revenue options that would provide the funding to solve these critical issues. We saw this election as a great opportunity to effect change. This work was interrupted by Supervisor Far-

rell's insistence on partnering homelessness with transportation and putting a split measure sales tax on the ballot. He insisted he had polling that showed it would win by a large margin. He touted that he had big tent support for the measure, and that this was the only one the Mayor would get on board with. He convinced many of his colleagues that this was the only option that would pass, and ushered people away from the progressive options that he stated would have great opposition. A large and very fragile coalition formed. But he never truly collaborated; he refused to show community members the poll, he never garnered input on how it

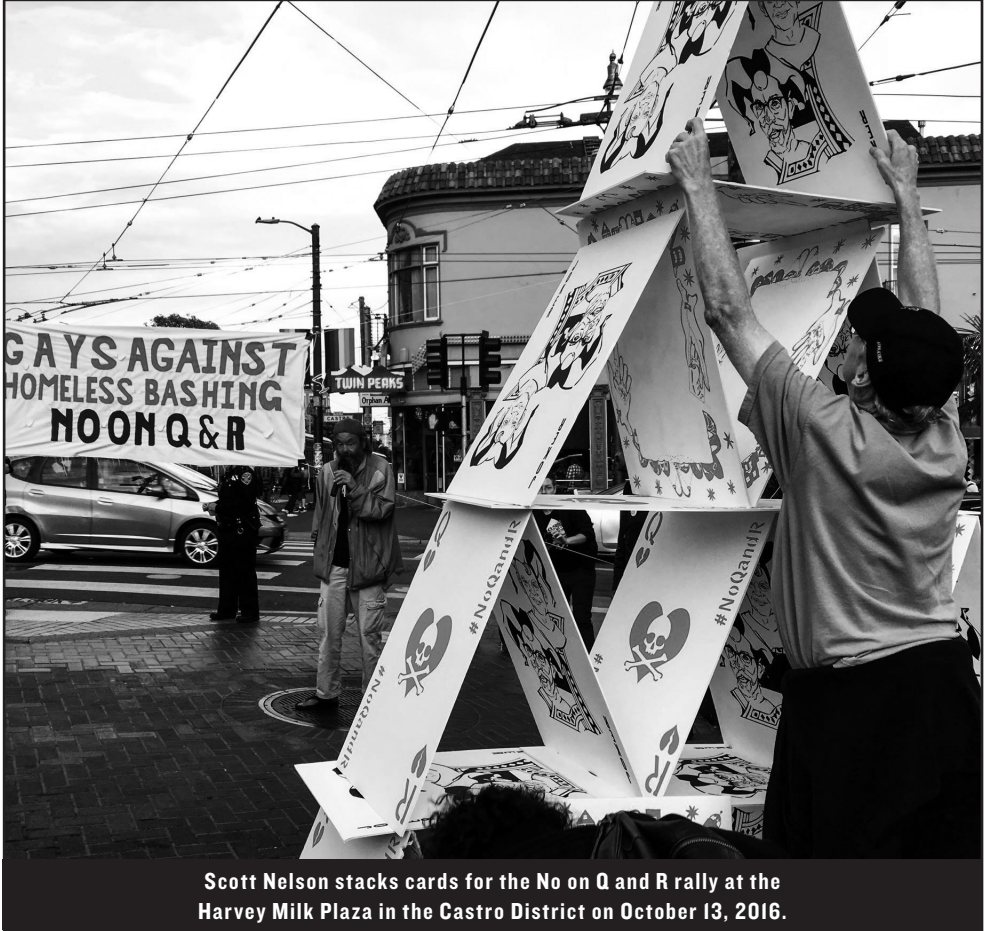
should be structured from key allies, and then once it was on the ballot, he went on to kick down the big tent and ensure the defeat of the very same sales tax he sponsored.

And kick down the tent he did: The sales tax, Prop K, lost with a massive thirty-point spread. He managed to alienate and anger potential allies quickly when he introduced alongside Supervisor Wiener two anti-homeless measures. Important colleagues who would have supported the measure or taken a neutral stance were rightly pointing out the sales tax would lose if the anti-homeless measure moved forward. Big tent coalitions are fragile,

and when you go out of your way to push people out of the tent, the tent gets very small, and it falls down. It was clear to everyone that while his tent ban, Prop Q, was pure political posturing that would neither decrease the number of tents on our sidewalk nor result in any solutions, it would deeply damage other efforts. The anti-homeless measures diverted both the campaign chest and the volunteers needed to pass the sales tax. The whole point of a big tent is to have big-tent resources. Many on the ground who would have spent all their time on the sales tax were now forced to spend time defending homeless people against the attacks levied against them in



Andrea Mayfield speaks at the Coalition on Homelessness' Day of the Dead event on November 2, 2016 to honor those who have died from the systemic violence of poverty and police violence, to speak out against Props Q and R, and to speak up for Prop S.



Scott Nelson stacks cards for the No on Q and R rally at the Harvey Milk Plaza in the Castro District on October 13, 2016.

LOCAL WINS

FROM PAGE 1

Farrell's Prop Q.

This is the other way he guaranteed the sales tax demise. He not only put all his resources and fundraising efforts on Prop Q (bringing in over \$700,000 to pass it), and did next to nothing for the sales tax measure (funded at half that without Farrell's help), but put out two very distinct poisonous messages that killed the sales tax. One was the anti-homeless vitriol. His ads showed a picture of a woman shooting up (likely garnered without her permission) and declared tent encampments unsafe and unhealthy, had a merchant talk about stepping on a needle, focused on stolen goods, and even stooped so low as to use the rape of homeless women as an excuse to tear away their tents.

Since tents themselves are incapable of such acts, you can only read this mes-

sure had no additional shelter beds or housing in it. He stated repeatedly that there were vacant shelter beds, failing to mention those beds were not available or only available for one night, and talked up the opening of six navigation centers and hundreds of units of supportive housing. All of this was stretching the truth of course—only two new navigation centers are going to open, and one of those is a replacement for the center that is closing. The hundreds of units of new supportive housing would run out after five years at best, and most of those will be for families with children and vets, still only serving a fraction of the 12,000 units needed. Beyond the lies, this messaging told voters that the city did not need the sales tax, and hacked away at the public's support.

While Farrell was kicking and punching the big tent he bragged so much about, the Mayor was also screwing our chances



Jennifer Friedenbach, Director of the Coalition on Homelessness, speaks to the Coalition on Homelessness' and Chinatown Community Development Center's members about the Prop S campaign.

commission), D (special elections), H (public advocate), and L (MTA appointments), and virtually neglected the sales tax. It got very little priority and very little funding: Three hundred fifty thousand was spent on Props J and K compared to the \$2.2 million spent to defeat M,D,H and L.

So where is the homeless victory in all of this? In spite of all this, homeless people and their supporters rose up and took some very powerful and surprising victories. In the end, San Francisco voters told City Hall that they do want the homeless population to be housed and they want a compassionate approach to homelessness. We had the massive defeat of the stinky real estate measures—Props P (32 percent support) and U (35 percent support)—one would have slowed down housing for homeless people and the other would have removed housing for working class San Franciscans. Proposition C passed with a whopping 76 percent and would allow a housing bond to purchase buildings where tenants are getting Ellis Act evicted. Most amazing for post-gentrification San Francisco is for the first time in over 15 years, a politician failed in their attempt to use homeless people as political fodder for their ambitions. Out of two anti-homeless measures on San Francisco's ballot, one has been defeated, Prop R (neighborhood policing) and the other, Prop Q (tent ban), is too close to call, and certainly is in no way a voter mandate. Farrell's Prop Q proponents

spent almost \$800,000 in funding from billionaires to take away tents from homeless people, and they expected to win in a landslide. Opponents, with only \$8,000, managed to beat back both Propositions Q and R with a powerful people driven grassroots campaign. These results constitute a major shift in the public's attitude. Back in 2010, the ban on sidewalk sitting or lying during daytime hours got 59 percent support, whereas Prop R, which would have permanently set aside 3 percent of police to criminalize homeless people and conflated property crime with poverty only garnered 45 percent of the vote.

At the same time, voters did approve Prop J, which asks the city to set aside \$50 million for homeless housing, while they chose to reject Proposition K, the funding mechanism. What voters said with this split vote is "We want homeless people to be housed. Use your budget to pay for it!". Also on the ballot was a voter-initiated proposition, Proposition S, which would have set aside hotel tax funding to end family homelessness. This measure was a clear voter mandate and received 63 percent approval, but failed to get the two-thirds voter approval required. This measure did not receive Mayoral support. However, the Mayor now has new instructions from the voters: "Find \$67 million in your 8.6 billion budget and solve this crisis now!"

It is up to all of us to ensure he does. ■



Postermaking with the Poster Syndicate at the Hospitality House Community Arts Program for the No on Q and R campaign.

saging as: homeless people as a class are unsafe, unhealthy, thieving, needle-waving rapists. Now, who wants to pay for their housing?

The second core part of his message was that there are enough services for homeless people. His rap was that shelter or housing would be offered, but the mea-

sure had no additional shelter beds or housing in it. He stated repeatedly that there were vacant shelter beds, failing to mention those beds were not available or only available for one night, and talked up the opening of six navigation centers and hundreds of units of supportive housing. All of this was stretching the truth of course—only two new navigation centers are going to open, and one of those is a replacement for the center that is closing. The hundreds of units of new supportive housing would run out after five years at best, and most of those will be for families with children and vets, still only serving a fraction of the 12,000 units needed. Beyond the lies, this messaging told voters that the city did not need the sales tax, and hacked away at the public's support.

BY THE
NUMBERS

THERE WAS A **63.14%**
VOTER TURNOUT RATE IN
SAN FRANCISCO, WITH **324, 258**
PEOPLE VOTING.

THE FOLLOWING REFLECT THE VOTES COUNTED
SINCE NOVEMBER 14, 2016 FROM THE SAN
FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS.

WE WANT C, J, K, M, S TO PASS
WE WANT O, P, U, Q, R TO FAIL

PROP C
Loans to Finance Acquisition and
Rehabilitation of Affordable Housing
76.17% YES
23.83% NO

PROP J
Funding for Homelessness and Transportation
66.36% YES
33.64% NO

PROP K
General Sales Tax
(which would have funded Prop J)
65.21% NO
34.79% YES

PROP M
Housing and Development Commission
56.61% NO
43.39% YES

PROP O
Special favor to Lennar Corporation Office
Development in Candle Stick and Hunters Point
52.49% YES
47.51% NO

PROP P
Competitive Bidding for
Affordable Housing Projects
67.38% NO
32.62% YES

PROP Q
Tent Ban on Sidewalks with
No NHousing or Social Services Provided
52.38% YES
47.52% NO

PROP R
Neighborhood Crime Units
54.77% NO
45.23% YES

PROP S
Allocation of Hotel Tax to Fund
Ending Family Homelessness and the Arts
62.92% YES
37.08% NO

This requires a 66.66% affirmative votes to pass.

PROP U
Affordable Housing Requirement (which would
take away Below-Market-Rate housing from
low-income and homeless people)
64.89% NO
35.11% YES

RISING UP FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

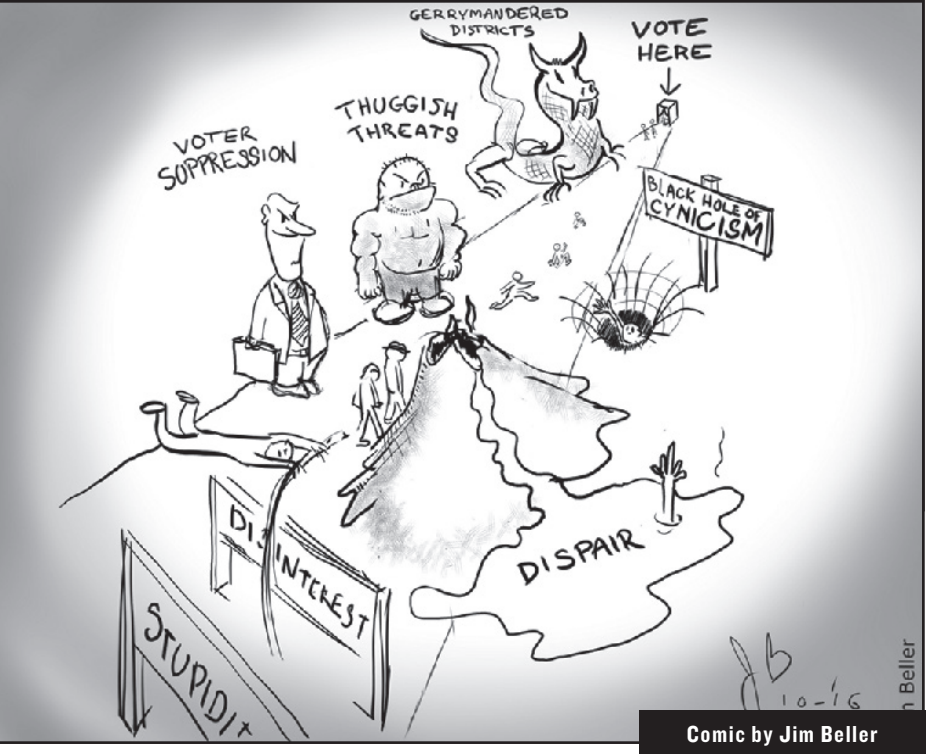
The night that Donald Trump was elected, about a hundred people marched through the streets of Oakland. By the next night, the crowd had swelled to thousands, many with different political views but all with a shared sense of outrage at the election of a fascist such as Donald Trump. Night after night the streets were taken, and day after day, Oakland high school students have walked out of their classrooms demonstrating their opposition to the newly elected regime.

For those of us who are tired of being forced to choose between fascism and neo-liberalism, it is a crucial time to band together to work on projects that will support the needs of those who our government has abandoned. When millions of people are locked up behind bars, refugees are being targeted, trans* people are being murdered, immigrants are being held in deportation centers, and hundreds of thousands are homeless, the fear we all experience is all too real.

The convergences in the streets have been heartening, but the real work happens every day. If we are to steer ourselves away from fascism the left must be able to offer security that rivals that of the state. Whether this means setting up free clinics, blocking ICE busses, turning our homes into Safe Houses, or offering free therapy, building infrastructure can help our people feel safe enough to take action against the current system. Do you have a car you could lend to friends? Do you have a spare room where you could host a refugee or homeless person? Do you have a garden with extra veggies you could use to cook someone a meal? These offerings mean so much in times of turmoil.

If you are wondering how to plug in, the best way to start is to get involved with an organization. Look for groups that aren't working with large budgets (or any budgets), as they usually are doing the best work. Look for groups that are led by people of color, queers, women, as they are usually doing the best work. Talk to your friends and families and see if you could join a project, or start a project, together.

We all need to take responsibility for protecting our communities, because it is becoming very clear that no one else is going to do that for us. Here are some thoughts from folks working on doing just that.



“It is important for those of us holding on barely to the margins of this stolen land to understand and innerstand that our dribble-down experience of the monsterule is really just an intensified hate, oppression, and terror of what we are already experiencing. To preserve our human and mental bodies we need to stay sane and realize this is nothing new. Next, we need to take action and, yes, that is protest for reparations. Poor People Don’t have Presidents or Governors or Mayors. We have ourselves.”

TINY, POOR MAGAZINE

“Elections revealed that within deeply divided nation. There are those facing the future and those trying to hold to ghosts of the past.”

VLAD K., STREET SHEET WRITER

AN EXQUISITE CORPSE FOR THE 2016 ELECTION

I PRESS MY HAND ON TOP OF THE PULSE OF THIS COUNTRY
IT PUSHES BACK
HARD
I KEEP MY BALANCE WHILE I WATCH IT BREATHE
A HEARTLESS PLACE I THOUGHT THIS WAS,
BUT HERE IT IS IN ALL ITS RAW. STILL GASPING
AND BOILING A BLOODY FEVER WE’RE STILL SWEATING TO BREAK
WE WAKE WITH SAND SCRATCHED THROATS AND ONLY CRUEL OFFERINGS
FROM THE SINK THAT DRIP WITH LEAD AND OIL AND
THIS MORNING, I CELEBRATE THAT THE FACE OF WHITE AMERICAN IMPERIALISM
IS NO LONGER BLACK OR HANDSOME OR HAS A JUMP SHOT OR CAN CARRY A TUNE OF GOSPEL
OR HAS HAIR THICK AS MY BABY BROTHER’S
BLESS THE CLARITY OF THIS MOMENT,
THE SINGULAR FOCUS THAT ALLOWS ME NOW TO NAME THE STORM A STORM
AND NOT LOVE IT EVEN A LITTLE
BUT INSTEAD COUNT THE WAYS TO TEAR DOWN A WALL
REMEMBER OUR PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TEARING DOWN WALLS
FROM THE RISING CONDOMINIUMS IN WEST OAKLAND
TO THE CONCRETE CELLS IN PELICAN BAY
YESTERDAY, THE PHILIPPINES SUPREME COURT RULED
TO PLANT A DICTATOR’S CORPSE INTO A HEROES’ MEMORIAL
REMEMBER, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE EVIL TO UPROOT.
AND LET THIS MOMENT BE AN UPROOTING
LET IT BE A PRELUDE TO EMPIRE CRUMBLING
TO THE SLAUGHTER OF THE BEASTS OF HATRED
THAT LIVE AND FEED IN THE WARM DARK OF ALL OF OUR HEARTS
OUR HEARTS
AIN’T READY TO COLLAPSE UNDER THE REGIMEN OF HATE
DESPAIR WANTS US TO REMODEL THIS NEW HOME
ORDER NEW LOCKS & PAINT OUR WALLS RED.
THINK US, MOLDABLE UNTIL WE ARE DESTRUCTIBLE.
THINK WE WON’T BUILD A HOME OUT OF OUR RAGE.
THINK WE WON’T HEAL FROM THIS MOMENT.
THINK WE WON’T REVOLT.

WRITTEN BY
TERISA SIAGANTONU, NATASHA HUEY, GABRIEL CORTEZ, JADE CHO & JANAEE JOHNSON

“The greatest trick that the Devil ever played was making people believe that he did not exist” is a quote from the Usual Suspects. America played the part when it told the world that racism here no longer mattered and offered as proof the election of Barack Obama in 2008. And so now the gloves come off; the battle can be rejoined; the line drawn in the sand crossed, for ‘our President’ now ‘belongs to the ages’.”

BILAL ALI, HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZER

“I watched as the adults of my country decided my future. A future of hate and intolerance. Youth refuse to stray from the human values of love and unity. Our walkouts represent our refusal to accept Trump’s bigotry and have empowered those under the voting age to have their voices heard.”

LIORI AMI, SAN FRANCISCO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

BROKEN WINDOWS POLICING CONTINUES TO CRIMINALIZE POOR PEOPLE



ASHER WAITE-JONES

I am a famously heavy sleeper. I slept through the sounds of my four-year-old housemate running up and down the hall outside my room. I slept through traffic accidents right outside my window. I slept through countless storms, and my second Bay Area earthquake. I learned to sleep through noise and smells and unwanted touches, through cold and rain. I learned to wake up instantly, alert at the sound of my alarm – a mechanical noise. Under the bridge where I lived when I was 17, we slept waiting to leave at a moment's notice, waiting for the police.

In an article by James Wilson and George Kelling, the theory of “broken windows” policing emerged on the scene in 1982. Wilson and Kelling argued that there was a positive link between neighborhood “disorder” and more serious, or violent, criminal activity. They argued that the presence of “panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed” made neighborhood residents both more fearful and less invested in their communities, which can lead to an increase in violent crime. The presence of “disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people,” Wilson and Kelling argued, would cause “many residents [to] think that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise, and [to] modify their behavior accordingly. They will use the streets less often, and when on the streets will stay apart from their fellows, moving with averted eyes, silent lips, and hurried steps.” The theory therefore argues that aggressive policing of minor “disorder” offenses can help reduce violent crime by creating a legal way to remove “unpredictable” people out of certain neighborhoods.

This theory, though highly thought of by many cities and police departments across the country, has been proven problematic, to say the least. For example, in New York City, where broken windows policing has been aggressively pursued, there was “no evidence demonstrating a clear,

direct link between an increase in [quality of life charges] and a related drop in felony crime.” In addition, a 2014 New York Daily News study found that quality of life charges were issued immensely disproportionately to people of color: “Between 2001 and 2013, an estimated 7.3 million people were issued [quality of life] violations by the police, 81 percent of whom were African American or Hispanic.”

Here in San Francisco, the City and the police department have also been pursuing a broken windows strategy. This includes Measure R, a ballot initiative that was voted on this November which would “create a special Neighborhood Crime Unit that would respond to both 911 and 311 calls, while focusing on offenses including robberies, break-ins, bike thefts, vandalism, aggressive panhandling and blocking sidewalks with tents.” Although Measure R did not pass, there are still many other broken windows policies that criminalize poor and homeless people.

Broken windows offenses in San Francisco include not just misdemeanor offenses, but also quality of life infractions or citations. Infractions are violations of the law below misdemeanors, adjudicated in traffic court. These offenses, usually adopted by the city in the Municipal Code, often

serve to criminalize the basic necessities of life for homeless people—hence the term “quality of life infraction.” For example, a 2015 study by the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) found that in San Francisco between 2006 and 2014, the police issued a yearly average of 3,200 citations for “sleeping, camping, sitting, resting, and begging.” Despite pressure from advocates on the ground, the number of people cited under these types of laws continues to grow. According to a June 2016 San Francisco Examiner article, between January and November 2015 the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) issued 60,491 “quality-of-life” citations.

Infractions are incredibly low-level in nature—a person convicted of an infraction cannot be sentenced to jail time. However, infractions can have tremendous consequences for those who fail to deal with them. When they are cited under “quality-of-life” ordinances, people receive a date by

chances of entering housing, and saddles homeless people with debt simply because they were too poor to afford a place to live.

Homeless people, adults, and youth face enormous barriers to dealing with citations, such as finding a safe place to keep the ticket, getting to and from court, and more. A San Francisco report by the Coalition on Homelessness found that 69 percent of homeless respondents received at least one citation in the past year, and that the majority received multiple citations. Sixty eight percent were unable to do anything to resolve their citations. As a result, homeless people are kept in debt and/or incarcerated, and the cycles of poverty and criminalization continue.

Despite estimated high numbers of homeless youth charged with quality of life citations, there are few organizations providing citation defense and none focusing on youth. My project, hosted by Legal Services for Children (LSC) and sponsored

IN THE PAST YEAR,

69% OF HOMELESS PEOPLE RECEIVED CITATIONS
68% WERE UNABLE TO RESOLVE THEIR CITATIONS

which they must appear at an arraignment. If an adult fails to appear by this court date, they receive either an automatic \$300 civil assessment that they have to pay regardless of the outcome of their underlying case or a bench warrant for their arrest and a criminal case. People under the age of 18 who fail to appear on citations also receive an additional fine. If they are picked up on bench warrants, homeless people often sit in jail for an original offense no more serious than a speeding ticket. Here in San Francisco, thankfully, about a year ago, the courts stopped the practice of issuing bench warrants for those tickets received after October, 2015. However, they continue to levy the civil assessment, which goes to a collection agency and destroys the credit of those unable to pay. This negatively affects one's

by ALM through its partnership with Equal Justice Works, will fill this gap.

In the next two years, I will represent Bay Area homeless youth ages 13 to 21 in traffic court proceedings. This work is deeply personal to me. After being expelled from my parents' house, I lived intermittently on the street from 16 to 18. Moving out from under the bridge, attending college, and law school, I was always drawn to working with homeless youth.

If you are under 21 and are charged with an infraction in San Francisco, Oakland or Berkeley, I want to hear from you. Please feel free to call Legal Services for Children at (415) 863-3762, and ask to speak with Asher, to set up an appointment to see if we can represent you in your citation case for free. ■

WRITER'S CORNER

“WHERE THERE IS OPPRESSION, THERE WILL BE RESISTANCE.” - ASSATA SHAKUR

Last month, the Black Panther Party (BPP) celebrated their 50th anniversary. Comrades have gathered in Oakland to ask community: “Where do we go from here?”

PROMPT Write a poem honoring the legacy of the BPP. Think about the resistance your community is grounded in. What does your resistance look like? Feel like? Taste like?

START A POEM WITH THE LINE I resist... I move toward...

This writing prompt is brought to you by **GHOSTLINES**. Ghostlines is a Bay Area collective of poets, artists, and educators comprised of Ariana Weckstein, Gabriel Cortez, Isabella Borgeson, Jade Cho, and Natasha Huey. We are committed to using art to cultivate empathy. To disrupt violent systems and thought. To nurture and challenge ourselves and our communities to rise. WWW.GHOSTLINESCOLLECTIVE.TUMBLR.COM

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WRITING WITH THE STREET SHEET, YOU CAN E-MAIL STREETSHOOT@COHSF.ORG OR MAIL TO STREET SHEET 468 TURK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The Street Sheet is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP	Every Tuesday at noon
HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP	Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.
STREET SHEET ORIENTATION	Monday–Tuesday from 9 a.m.–12 p.m.
STREET SHEET DISTRIBUTION	Monday–Friday from 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

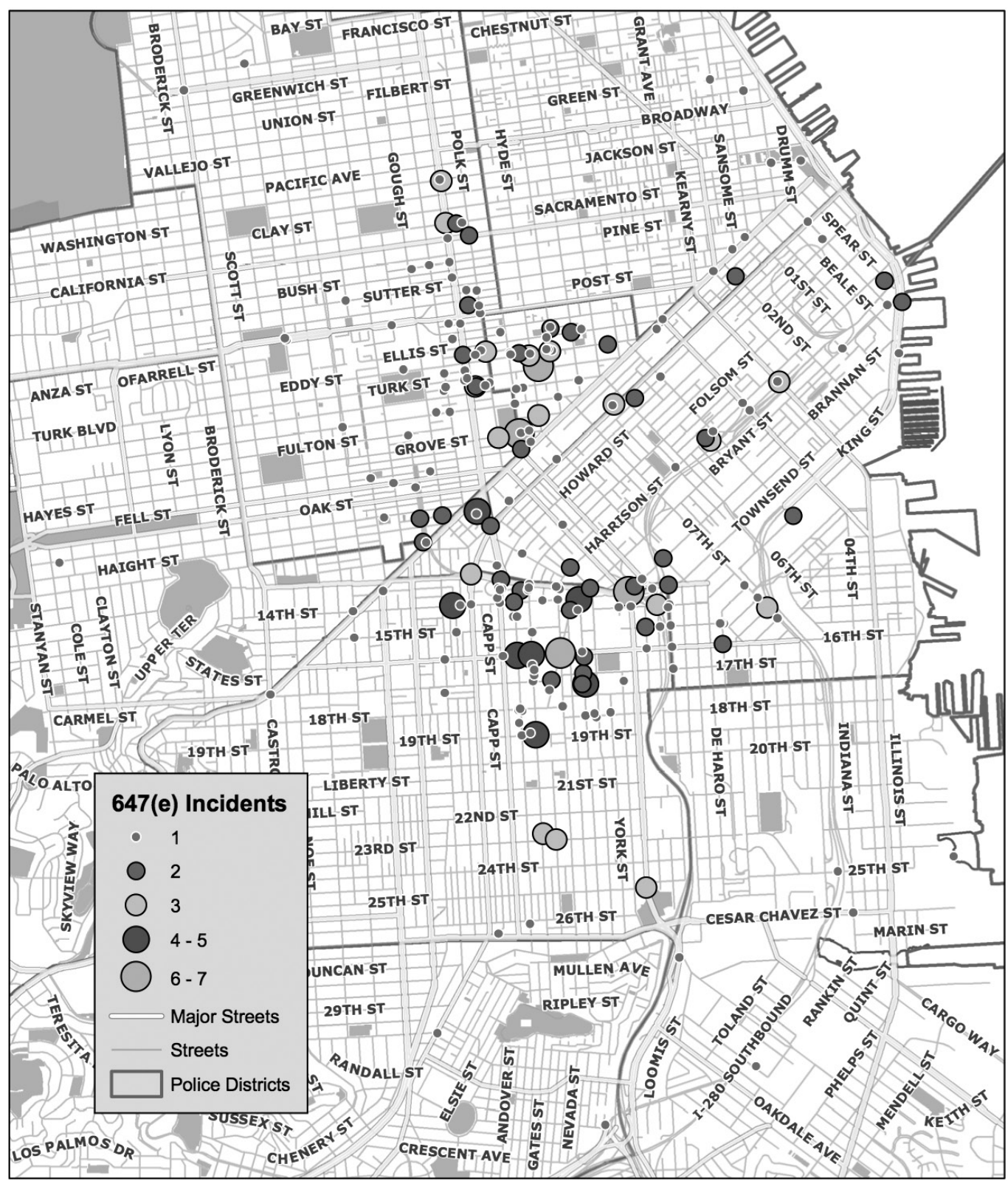
To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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Julia D’Antonio •Chris B.
Regina Bates • Katie Bernock •
Paul Boden • Miguel Carrera •
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VOLUNTEER WITH US! WE NEED:	JOURNALISTS
PHOTOGRAPHERS	INTERNS
VIDEOGRAPHERS	WRITER
ILLUSTRATORS	POETS
COMIC ARTISTS	EQUIPMENT:
NEWSPAPER LAYOUT	LAPTOPS
WEBSITE	DIGITAL CAMERAS
MAINTENANCE	AUDIO RECORDERS
GRAPHIC	SOUND EQUIPMENT
DESIGNERS	CONTACT:
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS	STREETSHOOT@COHSF.ORG



Citywide
647(e) - 337 Incidents
January thru September 2016
San Francisco Police Department

ILLEGAL LODGING CITATIONS MOSTLY IN MISSION

TJ JOHNSTON

Last week, San Francisco voted for Proposition Q, which would authorize a 24-hour notice period for the City’s removal of homeless camps. But in the meantime, police continue to enforce an already-existing law against outdoor sleeping, according to recently obtained data.

The City’s Police Department reported a total of 337 cases of illegal lodging—law enforcement’s term of art for sleeping outdoors—from January 2016 to September 2016.

The department released the figures and a map of frequently enforced areas in response to a public records request by Christopher Herring, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

The statute, which is listed as Section 647(e) of the California Penal Code,

requires police to fill out a report for citations, warnings and arrests, Lt. Michael Nevin wrote in response to Herring’s query.

Of these 337 lodging reports this year, 282 resulted in tickets and 25 in bookings. Nevin added that duplicates for some of those cited were possible.

The Mission District apparently has the highest incidence of rough sleepers in the City. That’s not a surprise, considering that area includes Division Street, where a set of encampments stretched for almost one mile beneath a highway overpass. Earlier this year, worldwide attention was focused on the encampments during the Super Bowl celebrations, until police and health department officials ordered tent dwellers to move. Also, the corner of Shotwell and 19th streets has at least four citations. That area gained notoriety for the fatal police shooting of Luis Góngora Pat, who

lived in a nearby tent.

Additionally, a section of 16th Street sees multiple reports. About one mile away, the Tenderloin neighborhood is clustered with cited camps.

Also, figures from the City’s Department of Public Works show 106 encampments—with at least two tents or structures each—recorded throughout 2016.

Apparently, the state anti-lodging statute is duplicated by some of the City’s police codes, including sidewalk obstruction, trespassing and the sit-lie law. Proposition Q, the tent ban that is likely to pass, is San Francisco’s 24th local ordinance that restricts homeless people’s outdoor activities, the most for any city in California.

A related ballot measure, Prop. R, went down in defeat. It would have set aside neighborhood police units for enforcement of homelessness-related offenses. ■



SHELTER CLIENT ADVOCATES BRING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO SHELTERS

The Coalition on Homelessness and the shelter client advocates, who advocate for shelter residents who have been evicted or denied a service, have begun to introduce restorative practices to the City-funded shelters. Restorative practices encompass restorative justice, which employs methods of community building and conflict resolution that have been successfully used in indigenous cultures all over the earth for thousands of years. Currently, the San Francisco and Oakland Unified School Districts as well as many other school districts across the country make use of restorative tools. As the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) indicates, “Restorative practice builds healthy communities, increases social capital, reduces the impact of crime, decreases anti-social behavior, repairs harm, and restores relationships.”

When doing outreach at shelter community meetings, we have begun to employ, whenever possible and practical, the use of restorative circles. We gather everyone around into a circle. The more we can actually approach sitting in a true circle, with either residents only, or residents and staff, the more powerful the circle is. A talking piece is employed, and only the person holding the talking piece is permitted to speak. Everyone answers the same question or questions. We will often ask folks to name one thing they appreciate about the shelter, one thing that needs improvement, and one thing each of them can do to make it a better place to be.

No one is required to speak, although they all must hold the talking piece, if only to say they pass. We always endeavor

to go around the circle at least twice, as we invariably find that many folks who pass the first time will feel more comfortable in speaking the second time around, and/or they want to echo and elaborate on something someone else has said, or, since they passed the talking piece, the discussion has stimulated other ideas they want to share. We always write down people’s responses without identifying those who conveyed them.

As the IIRP points out, circles create equality in that they allow each person to be heard so that no one person or persons can dominate the discussion, safety and trust, and responsibility. “In a circle, everyone can look each other in the eyes so nothing is hidden.” Everyone has the ability to play a part in the outcome of the circle, creating ownership: Folks in the circle feel that together they have full claim to the process facilitation; the leader is reminded to be neutral instead of imposing their own opinions and connections. People have the opportunity to be heard and be better understood by others, as well as to better understand where other folks are coming from.

The shelter client advocates have, on several occasions, facilitated or participated in circles in which clients work to repair the harm they have done to other shelter residents and/or staff. In this kind of circle, different questions are asked of the person doing the harming and those who were harmed by the action or actions. Here are two series of questions that might be asked of the person who holds the talking piece.

Response to challenging behavior: What happened? What were you thinking

at the time? What have you thought about since? Who has been affected by what you have done? In what ways? What do you think you need to do to make things right?

To help those harmed by other’s actions: What did you think when you realized what had happened? What impact has this incident had on you & others? What has been the hardest thing for you? What do think needs to happen to make things right?

In order for this type of circle to yield positive results, the person or persons who did the harm must take some ownership of their actions, and those who experienced harm must be willing to actively listen to what the person(s) who harmed them has to say. If these two things occur, the potential for understanding, forgiveness and healing on both sides is very real.

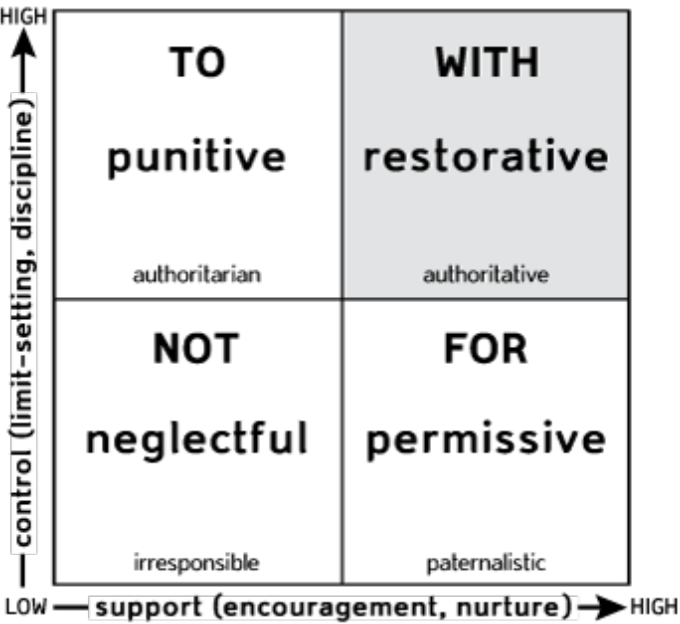
One of the larger aims of this work we are undertaking is to demonstrate the effectiveness of circles, and have both shelter residents and shelter staff adopt these practices as tools for community building and eventually, as a tool for conflict resolution as well.

In addition, bringing circles to shelter community meetings informs the work of the Coalition On Homelessness; that is, the Coalition is an organization of largely

homeless and formerly homeless people one of whose aims it is to give voice to the concerns and needs of people who are themselves currently homeless. And we believe that all voices of houseless folks are important. To the extent that we are able to foster those voices being heard, acknowledged, and communicated to the

programs they are engaged with, the general public, and to the policymakers who are responsible for ensuring their highest possible well being, the more successful we are in determining that the Coalition is of, by, and for the people who currently are unhoused.

“The fundamental premise of restorative practices is that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things with them, as opposed to them or for them.” ■



SAYING GOODBYE TO C.W.

TJ JOHNSTON

C.W. Nevius, a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter, is leaving the *San Francisco Chronicle* on December 2. As Bette Davis would say, that is good.

In the column where Nevius announced his impending departure, he speculated on a celebratory dance performed by Jennifer Friedenbach, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes Street Sheet. He also linked this musing to an open letter he published, lambasting the Coalition’s decades-long efforts to serve, empower and advocate for the homeless community that he concurrently maligned.

That he would imagine a happy dance in his honor should come as no surprise to longtime readers of his paper and ours.

He began his *Chronicle* tenure covering the Oakland Raiders. Eventually he moved from the sports section to penning columns about city life in San Francisco — while living across the Bay in suburban Walnut Creek until moving to the city in 2010.

His coverage of homelessness defined his work, similar to the way the Iraq war defined George W. Bush’s presidency or the 49ers’ performance under CEO Jed York’s tenure. It also provided the public face of anti-homeless sentiment in San Francisco and mouthpiece for “tough love” — read: criminalizing — tactics on the most visible and troubled members of the homeless population.

The passage from July 24, 2007, compares homeless people to natural predators: “Forget the coyotes. Do you think your biggest concern is getting bit by a wild animal? Frankly, if you are in Golden Gate Park, a far greater danger is that you, or your child, or your pet, will step on a dirty hypodermic needle. Step off their paths, and you’ll find plenty of chances.”

Nevius wrote this in a year that saw sweeps of homeless people in the parks. These sweeps were performed under the rationale that the inhabitants were drug-crazed hobos who despoiled the natural beauty of the parks with their refuse and drug paraphernalia.

Adopting the persona of a frustrated Everyman, Nevius crusaded against the most glaring symptoms of homelessness, such as panhandling, rummaging for recyclables, or just for their mere outdoor presence.

To this end, Nevius promoted anti-homeless policies: Care Not Cash, the sit-lie law, sweeps of tent villages along Division Street, and most recently, Proposition Q, the tent-ban measure that appears that it will pass but is still undecided. The *Chronicle* gave prominent placement to his views, sometimes on Page One.

THE WORST OF NEVIUS

“There isn’t any question which the majority of San Franciscans would choose. The city’s urine-soaked streets, aggressive panhandlers and sidewalk campers have appalled tourists and neighborhood residents for years.” — 12/23/10

“Forget the coyotes. Do you really think your biggest concern is getting bit by a wild animal ... a far greater danger is that you, or your child, or your pet, will step on a dirty hypodermic needle. Step off their paths, and you’ll have plenty of chances.” — 7/24/07

“Chronic and incorrigible avoid the consequences of their actions — aggressive panhandling, public urination or drunkenness — often through the help of well-intentioned attorneys for homeless advocates.” —3/13/08 [case of James Allen Hill, who died in San Francisco Public Library bathroom on 3/7/08; CW claimed City did all it could]

“You will hear a lot about ‘criminalizing the homeless,’ in these kind of cases, but who’s really being hurt here? It is annoying to have a nuisance like Hill in the neighborhood, but even the police don’t want to lock him up.” [The Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights was representing Hill at the time of death;CW said they enabled his death]

“This isn’t really about recycling; it is more about the homeless and street people who roam the neighborhoods, raiding the residents’ blue recycling bins. Residents say that vagrants swipe their cans and bottles, turn them in at the recycling centers and finance their drug and alcohol addictions.” — 1/31/08

As early as 2007, Nevius posited a city official’s idea that took form of the sit-lie law. In 2010, then-mayor Gavin Newsom put it on the ballot, and the *Chronicle*’s coverage swayed a majority of voters into passing the ordinance. The now-defunct Bay Citizen found that out of the 71 columns he wrote that year, Nevius dedicated about one-third to sit-lie and related issues: Nevius wrote 20 columns and two blog posts in favor of sit-lie, and the paper ran 29 favorable items overall.

“This was an issue that resonated,” Nevius told the *New York Times*. “I understand the role of an advocate. You just can’t say ‘no’ to everything.”

Yet, earlier this year, he proposed saying “no” to people without housing after a month-long media discussion on homelessness.

“Any person who comes to San Francisco and sits down on the street becomes

our problem,” he wrote. “We can set a cap, or a ceiling on what we will do, how much we can spend and how many people we’ll help at a time.”

The thing is, “our problem” is actually a compound of several problems: economic inequity, federal divestment from affordable housing, and diminishment of working-class jobs, just to name a few. Nevius’s annoyance with the homeless population extended to the homeless advocacy community. When James Allen Hill, a homeless man, died in a library bathroom in March 2008, Nevius said that the Coalition enabled Hill’s alcohol-related demise, simply by referring Hill to legal counsel for his multiple status-offense citations. In Nevius’s narrative, the “system” did all it could for Hill—short of providing addiction treatment, of course—but was thwarted by the advocates’ pesky insistence on due process.

Journalism has its own terms of art. One of these is “the takeaway.” *Street Sheet* hopes that The *Chronicle*’s takeaway will be that it attacks the problem of homelessness, not homeless people. May The *Chronicle* and Nevius’s successor remember that. ■

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The staff and volunteers of the Coalition on Homelessness thank the following STREET SHEET. Your continued support has been vital in keeping the STREET SHEET on the streets since 1989.

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WE MUST ALWAYS ATTACK THE PROBLEM
OF HOMELESSNESS, NOT HOMELESS PEOPLE.



Firecrackers, Chinatown, San Francisco

PHOTO: RAOUL OLLMAN WWW.ROLLMANSF.COM

Helping us to reflect on the daily life of our streets, photographers offer one picture that represents their personal take on urban life.

About the artist: Raoul Ollman represents the typical sort of San Franciscan multi-disciplinary artist: Graphic designer, photographer, parent. Husband of a wife who is the founder and manager of two Yoga Centers, one in New York and the other one in San Francisco, Raoul has lived in SF for 28 years and considers it his home. His photographic approach depicts hidden elements in scenes that are not visible for the common viewer. But with his eyes of a graphic artist, he offers us a different vision of our streets.

About the photo: This shot was taken in front of a kite store, on Grand Ave in SF, celebrating their opening. Firecrackers are traditionally blown up. Luckily I was walking by and foolish enough to get that close to this massive explosion. While I was glad to get the shot, my ears rang for hours afterwards. ■

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